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# Wanda Byrd

## WB Jewelry Chest

**Success Magazine:** Wanda how did you get started in the jewelry business?

Wanda Byrd: I started my business in the late 1990's. At that time, I was looking for a second income to support my household while going through a divorce. My first venture was a storefront on Jay Street in Schenectady, NY where I sold ladies fashions and accessories. I was later introduced to the idea of selling jewelry on eBay—which led me to build my own Web site.

**SM:** How did your online business begin?

WB: My accessory business was unsuccessful as a storefront due to its location. So I moved my business online, selling only fine jewelry. I began it in the basement of my home with a computer, a scanner, and catalogs from different jewelry vendors. Working from home after leaving my county job during the day allowed me to continue to devote time to my children and my duties at home. My three sons were active in afterschool programs and sports at the time. They attended an afterschool program at the Hamilton Hill Art Center in Schenectady where they learned how to play steel drums. Later they began the Hamilton Hill Steel Drum Band, performing throughout the Capital District and at the famous Apollo Theatre in Harlem, NY. Running my online business from home allowed me the freedom to chauffeur the band to different events. This was an exciting experience for the entire family. You can read more about that experience by purchasing the book, *Steel Drumming at the Apollo* published by Lee and Loew.

**SM:** How did you learn to be a merchant on the Internet?

WB: I learned about selling items on eBay from a co-worker. This co-worker would sell her children's clothes on eBay once they outgrew them. I thought that the possibility of jewelry selling on eBay would be great. During that time there were not many vendors

selling fine jewelry on eBay. After listing lots of products on eBay, having an eBay storefront and the experience of all the fees associated with selling products on eBay, this became very expensive. So I learned basic html and developed my own Web site hosted by Yahoo.

**SM:** How did you learn to use the Web?

WB: Through daily trial and error. I read a few online articles which shared information on how to promote your Web site and the importance of keywords. Each day, month, and year my Web site improved.

**SM:** What advice can you give someone trying to start a new business on the Web?

WB: Research the market for the product you want to sell. Know your product and your suppliers. Most importantly, believe you will be successful and be willing to sacrifice time. I also believe in the power of prayer—before I even listed my first product online, I prayed for the success of my Web site.

**SM:** Why do you think you have succeeded in this venture when others have failed?

WB: Others may have failed due to a lack of willpower to succeed, not focusing on their goals, or not having enough support. My business has been successful due to my focus on long and short-term goals, my strong will to succeed, and staying spiritually grounded. My family provided tremendous support. My sons would often help with completing shipping labels, and my fiancé, Spencer Anderson, would assist in shipping. He also purchased my first computer and scanner. My daughter, Diane, helped process orders. Later on my brother, Arnold Byrd, assisted with adding products to my Web

site and providing customer support.

**SM:** What are your goals for the future of your business and personal life?

WB: My goal for the business is to become a place where most online jewelry shoppers will find the items they need at a low price. I strive to continue providing both a high quality product and excellent customer service. I also plan to enhance the Web site, giving our customers a better feel for the products and allowing the customer to create their own gemstone and diamond rings. Product appearance and accurate descriptions are very important to the online shopper. My goal for my personal life is to continue in my spiritual growth. One of the most important things I learned from my parents is that as long as I maintain a close walk with God by being obedient to His word (the Holy Bible), God will meet all of my needs and give me the desires of my heart.

**SM:** How will you achieve your business goals?

WB: Through continued relationships with jewelry manufacturers and vendors, as well as developing new networks and business relationships. My attendance at jewelry trade shows is also very important in achieving my business goals. This will allow for an increase in products and help us keep up with the latest jewelry trends. Excellent customer service will be maintained by providing quick responses to questions and timely shipments.

**SM:** Your father is bishop of a local church in Saratoga. What is the most important thing he taught you?

WB: Yes, my father is a bishop of Soul Saving Station for Every Nation, Christ Crusaders of America. The church organization has many churches throughout the US, Canada, and in Haiti. My father presides over the church in Saratoga Springs, NY.

One of the most important things my father has taught me is the power of prayer—believing (having faith in God) and obedience. These things have helped me carry my business forward in both a good and struggling economy.

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Contact us at:  
Phone: (518)878-1592

Email: [wbjewelry@yahoo.com](mailto:wbjewelry@yahoo.com)  
[www.wbjewelrychest.com](http://www.wbjewelrychest.com)